

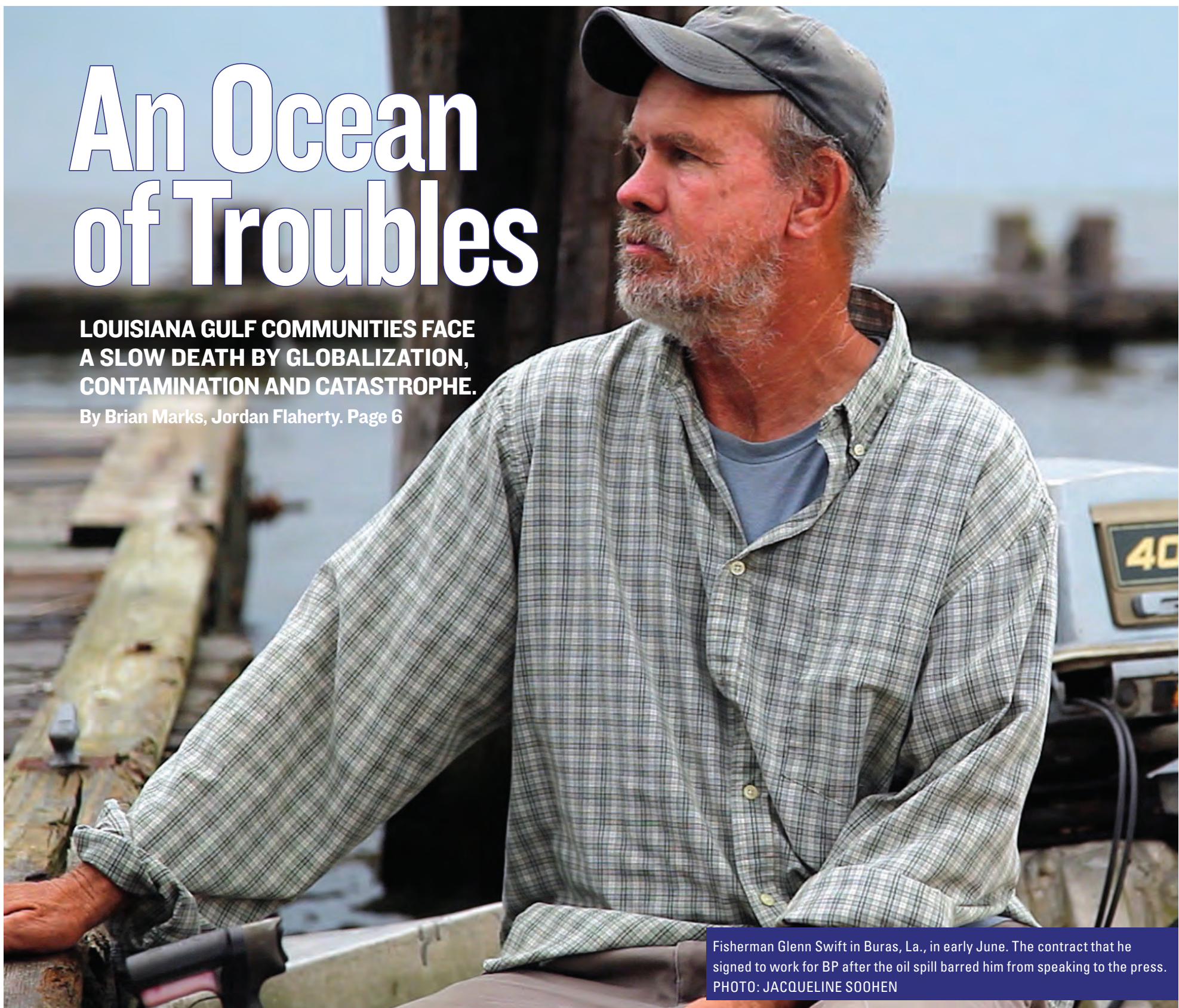
THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #153, June 23 - July 20, 2010
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

An Ocean of Troubles

LOUISIANA GULF COMMUNITIES FACE
A SLOW DEATH BY GLOBALIZATION,
CONTAMINATION AND CATASTROPHE.

By Brian Marks, Jordan Flaherty. Page 6



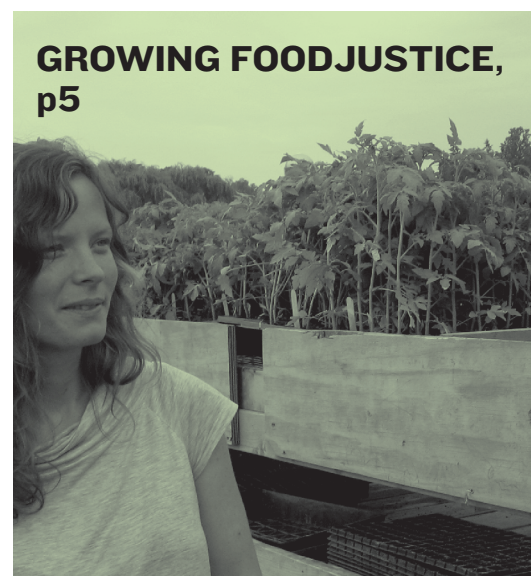
Fisherman Glenn Swift in Buras, La., in early June. The contract that he signed to work for BP after the oil spill barred him from speaking to the press. PHOTO: JACQUELINE SOOHEN



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The Independent is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays to our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Independent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging people to produce their own media. The Independent is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. The Independent reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Independent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center, which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and to *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website where anyone can publish news (nyc.indymedia.org.)

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community calendar

PLEASE SEND EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS TO INDYEVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

THU JULY 1

6:30-9pm • Free
FILM SCREENING: *THE FALL OF FUJIMORI*. Part of the Conflicts in Latin America Film Festival, this political thriller documents Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, whose rule was marked by violence, corruption and controversy. Community Church of New York, John Holmes House Gallery Room, 28 E 35th St 646-723-1749 • panys.org

SUN JULY 4

8pm • Free
EVENT: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS RIDE. Join Time's Up! for the Know Your Rights Ride and head to the fireworks. Astor Place Cube, 8th St and 4th Ave 212-802-8222 • times-up.org

MON JULY 5

7pm • Free
READING: *INSIDE OUT*. Join author Barry Eisler for a reading of his new political fictional thriller, *Inside Out*, and a discussion with Truthout and GRITtv host Laura Flanders. Partners & Crime Books 44 Greenwich Ave truthout.org/eislernyc • 212-243-0440

MON JULY 7

6pm • Free
TRAINING: HOUSING JUSTICE. Join solidarity groups organizing against gentrification. Jews For Radical and Economic Justice 666 Broadway, Suite 500 212-647-8966 • jfrej.org

SAT JULY 10

10am-4pm • Free
RECYCLING: E-WASTE RECYCLING DAY. The Lower East Side Ecology Center will hold an electronics recycling day. Drop off computers, printers, televisions, cell phones and more. Tekserve, 119 W 23rd St 212-477-4022 • lesecologycenter.org

WED JULY 14

6-8pm • \$11 (\$9 students, seniors)
CONVERSATION: THE HIMALAYAN GLACIERS AND ASIA'S LOOMING WATER CRISIS. The Himalayas are home to some of the world's largest glaciers, which supply crucial seasonal flows to rivers across Asia — and they are quickly disappearing. Panelists include Bill McKibben of 350.org and the executive direc-

tor of Glacier Works, David Breashears. The Asia Society Museum, 725 Park Ave 212-288-6400 • asiasociety.org

THU JULY 15

7-8:30pm • Free
WORKSHOP: STREET CARE 101. Learn to care for local street trees. Learn the benefits of trees in your neighborhood, including how they reduce air pollution and increase business. Order free trees for your block and receive a free street tree care kit. Sustainable NYC, 139 Avenue A 212-477-4022 • lesecologycenter.org

THU JULY 15

Wed — Sun 11am — 6pm • \$4 sugg
EXHIBIT: *AIN'T I A WOMAN*. This exhibit examines women of African Diaspora as active participants in their own visual representation. The exhibit will run until Dec. 19. Museum of Contemporary Art of African Diaspora Art, 80 Hansen Place, Bklyn 718-230-0492 • mocada.org

THU JULY 15

6:30-9pm • Free
FILM SCREENING: *PLAN COLOMBIA: CASHING IN ON THE DRUG WAR FAILURE*. Part of the Conflicts in Latin America Film Festival, this documentary recounts the United States' role in Colombia's drug trafficking and civil unrest. Community Church of New York, John Holmes House Gallery Room, 28 E 35th St 646-723-1749 • panys.org

THU JULY 22

6pm • \$10
FUNDRAISER: RETHINK POVERTY. Presented by Nene Ali in conjunction with LatinosNYC. Bring a can of food or a non-perishable item for a chance to win great prizes and raise money for Artists United Against Poverty. Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E 3rd St 212-780-9386 • nuyorican.org

MON JULY 26

7-8pm • Free
READING: COFFEE HOUSE PRESS AUTHORS. Aaron Michael Morales, author of *Drowning Tuscon*, and Travis Nicholas, author of *Off We Go into the Wild Blue Yonder* will be reading from their new books. McNally Jackson, 52 Prince St 212-274-1160 • mcnallyjackson.com

reader comments

Post your own comments online at the end of each article or email letters@indypendent.org.

PIGEONHOLING ART

Response to "A Look at Art and Public Pedagogy in New York City" June 2:

One of the problematic areas is that many of these groups keep one foot in the art world, and with their other foot, they are invested in and exploring education and the facets within education they have chosen (architecture, sociology, writing, etc). I'm sure they wouldn't mind leaving the art world behind, so why don't they? They could develop their program in a way where they wouldn't need to listen to all the criticism of how this is or isn't art and whether it's affecting enough social change by

offering real/tangible outcomes. Shall we ask painters how much social change their effect with their work? I think the proof of their importance is plain and simple — they are finding ways to change people's perspectives on obligatory schooling.

—ERIC

ONE-SIDED NEWS

Response to "Palestine Solidarity: One Woman's Journey," June 2:

I am an Israeli citizen living in New York for over a year now. I will start by stating that I cannot tolerate loss of innocent lives. The situation in the area I was born in is very grave. People



ESSAYS
WALLACE SHAWN

UPCOMING
EVENTS

THE BRECHT FORUM

BUILDING A MOVEMENT
THAT MOVES

451 West Street (btw Bank and Bethune)

SUN JULY 11 • 2PM

READING: Noted playwright, actor and political humorist Wallace Shawn will be the keynote speaker of the first annual Annette Rubinstein arts and letters lecture. Shawn will be reading from his latest book essay and discuss literature and the political sphere. Special 35th anniversary event! Sliding scale: \$10-\$50

FRI JULY 2 • 7:30PM

FORUM/PERFORMANCE: ONE YEAR AFTER THE COUP DETAT IN HONDURAS. Perspectives from diplomat Rodolfo Pastor and Honduran singer Karla Lara. Moderated by Tamar Sharabi, who has been documenting the resistance movement and will show some original footage of some of the worst repression that took place. Sliding scale: \$10/\$12/\$15

TUES JULY 13 • 7:30PM

DISCUSSION: THE EUROPEAN LEFT TODAY. Walter Baier of the Transform Network will present an overview of the European Left and then will engage in conversation with Rick Wolff about the lessons for the U.S. in the European Left experience. Topics will include the rise of the Die Linke party in Germany as well as anti-capitalist parties across Europe. Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

FOR INFORMATION AND TICKET RESERVATIONS

brechtforum.org
or 212-242-4201

WED JULY 29

7-9pm • \$5-25
SCREENING: THE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE OF THE DISABLED. The Center for the Independence of the Disabled (CIDNY) presents the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act with a screening of *Tales of the ADA*, complete with drinks, hors d'oeuvres, live music, good conversation and door prizes. Proceeds benefit CIDNY's programs. The LGBT Community Center 208 W 13th St 646-442-4156 • eeason@cidny.org

THU JULY 30 — FRI JULY 31

8pm • Sliding Scale \$12-\$25
THEATER: *ANTIGONE*. Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* is resurrected by Brooklyn-based multi-media queer, gender-queer and transgender performance collective Theater Transgression. House of Yes, 342 Maujer St, Bklyn antigoneistrans@gmail.com theatertransgression.com

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indypendent.org.

the baby with the water. I de-nounce one-sidedness, no matter who is doing it. Please open your eyes and give all the facts. Fox News does not do that, but neither do you. So that puts you in the same boat as them.

—EDO CEDER

COMMUNITY REPORTBACK

Response to "Activists Recount Events on the Mavi Marmara," IndyBlog June 18:

Thank you for covering the event. It was great to see so many people, not just Palestinians and Muslims, coming out to support these speakers.

—JONATHAN

Out on the Streets

UNDERSTANDING THE SECTION 8 HOUSING CRISIS

BY MARY WILLIAMS

As summer begins, thousands of families throughout New York City may soon have to choose between the shelter system and the streets. The New York City Housing Authority, faced with decreased federal funding, is on track to close the budget gap by cutting as many as 10,000 Section 8 rental-assistance vouchers for low-income tenants.

The Independent sat down with Jill Gerson, a lecturer in Lehman College's Social Work Department and an expert on low-income housing and homelessness in New York City, to discuss the impending Section 8 cuts, homelessness prevention and the importance of empathy.

MARY WILLIAMS: *Why are Section 8 vouchers important?*

JILL GERSON: This housing program has helped a lot of people and it's a very useful policy. Section 8 is a way for people to know that there's a safety net between having to live in a shelter and living in an apartment.

MW: *How will the cuts to Section 8 vouchers affect New Yorkers?*

JG: From a psychological point of view — nobody knows what's happening, nobody is getting information. People with vouchers who want to leave the shelter system are told that their vouchers aren't valid. This is the issue: When something happens with a voucher program or a work stability program, when something happens to an individual in the program, there's nothing. No safety net. They don't



UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS: Picture the Homeless organizer Tyletha Samuels addresses the crowd, where Jill Gerson joined other activists and community members to discuss the Section 8 voucher crisis on June 7. PHOTO: PICTURE THE HOMELESS

get treated in a reasonable way, in a civil way. You feel even more stigmatized. People get panicked — it's harder for them to cope, to think. It becomes hard for them to approach their caseworkers and ask — how can we work together to fix this? Caseworkers need to understand and empathize with the person, to walk in their sneakers.

MW: *How did this happen?*

JG: I don't know how this was allowed to happen. My guess, one part of the system wasn't talking to another. And nobody was accountable. That's what happens when people are reacting all the time and not being proactive. I don't know why the hell they didn't have a contingency plan. They make their clients have contingency plans — for example, what do you do if the day care doesn't work out? What are alternatives?

MW: *Do you think more people will be living in shelters, and are shelters prepared to service a large influx of residents?*

JG: No. How could they be? There's going to be a press from the front door and more people coming. Unless I'm wrong, nobody's building affordable housing not related to Section 8.

MW: *In an ideal world, how would we be dealing with homelessness?*

JG: Ideally, when people start paying rent late, we need to have some understanding of why this is happening. Any early prevention needs to start right when the trouble begins. We need to train landlords to deal with these issues.



Ticket to Ride

STUDENTS WIN METROCARD FIGHT

TEXT AND PHOTO BY JAISAL NOOR

Mayank Kumar, 17, from Desis Rising Up and Moving holds up his free MetroCard. Students scored a major victory June 18 when state lawmakers agreed to continue funding free and reduced-fare MetroCards. The cash-strapped Metropolitan Transportation Authority's plan to scrap subsidized MetroCards sparked outrage across the city in December 2009. The cuts would have affected more than 500,000 youths. Student groups representing low-income, immigrant and minority communities joined forces under the banner Urban Youth Collaborative to oppose the measure. They tirelessly lobbied state, local and MTA officials, held press conferences and spoke out at rallies, culminating on June 11 when some 1,000 students walked out of their schools in protest.

"We have to make sure this victory is not a temporary bandage over the wound," said 16-year-old Chastity Soriano of the Urban Youth Collaborative and Make the Road New York. "We need MetroCards to be fully funded permanently."



UNITED: Palestine solidarity activists carry Turkish and Palestinian flags at a May 31 demonstration condemning Israel's attack on an aid flotilla trying to break the blockade of Gaza. That day, Israeli commandos killed nine people aboard the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish ship. PHOTO: ELLEN DAVIDSON

FLOTILLA ATTACK FUELS MOVEMENT TARGETING ISRAEL

BY ALEX KANE

As Israel continues to deal with the international condemnation of its May 31 raid on an aid flotilla trying to break the Gaza blockade, Palestine solidarity groups in New York City have mobilized thousands of people to participate in protests, attend talks and learn more about the realities of life on the ground in Palestine.

Organizers with Adalah-NY, as well as Al-Awda New York and Jews Say No!, are looking to the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement targeting Israel as the next step for keeping people involved.

First initiated in 2005 by a large coalition of Palestinian grassroots organizations, the BDS movement has spread around the world as a method to pressure Israel to obey international law — a goal that is likely to have a special resonance after the Israeli navy stopped the flotilla from reaching Gaza by attacking and commandeering the ships in international waters.

"After every crisis, there is always a surge in interest in Palestine solidarity work," said Ethan Heitner, an activist with Adalah-NY. The BDS movement "is a way to do the work year-round and continue to put pressure proactively on Israel beyond responding to the immediate headlines."

Adalah-NY is currently calling for the boycott of three different stores in Manhattan: Max Brenner, an Israeli chocolate shop that has ties to the Israeli military; Aroma Espresso, an Israeli-owned coffee shop; and Ricky's NYC, a beauty supply store that carries AHAVA products, whose main factory is located in an illegal settlement in the West Bank.

The BDS movement demands that Israel withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories, implement equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel and recognize the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees and their descendants who fled or were expelled from Palestine during the 1947-49 Israeli-Arab War.

The attack on the flotilla "really brought home that Gaza is occupied and under siege," said Jane Hirschmann, a founding member of Jews Say No!. "Suddenly, people were saying, 'Wait, what's wrong with this picture? Why can't these materials be brought into Gaza?' It brought home concretely to people the problem and the issue in a way that it had never done before."

Gaza has been under a severe blockade since June 2007, when the Islamist movement Hamas took control of the coastal strip. Banned items included chocolate, toys and musical instruments, according to the Israeli human rights organization Gisha. The embargo has crippled the economy, and in the aftermath of the devastating 2008-09 Israeli assault, the infrastructure of Gaza remains severely damaged due to Israel largely blocking construction materials from entering.

In response to mounting international pressure, Israel agreed June 20 to "ease" the blockade of Gaza. But human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem have viewed the announcement only as a tiny step in the right direction — the naval blockade will remain, and the movement of people and exports across the border will still be restricted.

"The Israeli strategy is to make the international community talk about a bag of cement here, a project there. We need full unfettered access through all the crossings," Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, recently told Reuters.

But while the world's eyes remain on the blockade of Gaza, many activists emphasize that ending the siege is only the first step in a long struggle.

"The siege of Gaza has been going on for three years," said Dima Abi Saab, an organizer with Al-Awda NY: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition. "But the occupation of Palestine as a whole has been going on for 62 years, and the suffering is equal."

THE INDYPENDENT'S SUMMER CULTURE GUIDE

PAGES 9-12

Take Back the Summer

Students Win Last Chance for Diploma

By JAISAL NOOR

Samuel J. Tilden High School, one of the last schools in Brooklyn to offer bilingual instruction in Haitian Creole and English, will close its doors this summer despite more than three years of struggle by a coalition of community advocates against the city’s Department of Education.

John Lawhead, an English instructor at Tilden for the past six years, says 50 of the school’s 123 seniors may not pass their Regents exams in time to attend graduation later this month. While the New York City Department of Education (DOE) will now offer English language Regents prep classes to Tilden’s students this summer, advocates say summer school alone is not an effective remedy to this structural problem.

“It’s extremely discouraging because it clearly takes tremendous efforts — more than three years of full-time activism — to extract the most minor concession of the DOE,” said Leonie Haimson of the education nonprofit Class Size Matters. “I find it unbelievably perplexing why they wouldn’t want these students to graduate.”

Many of the school’s Haitian Creole-speaking students, who make up the majority of the student body, have already left the school because they did not think they could earn their degrees in time.

“I have friends who gave up and dropped out of Tilden because they knew they couldn’t graduate by June,” said Jerome Djisy, a senior at Tilden.

It often takes students who are learning English as their second language five or six years to complete high school, especially since many of them need to learn reading, writing and language skills, Lawhead said.

However, Tilden’s English Language Learner (ELL) instruction — which featured

classes taught in both English and Haitian Creole, allowed students to learn English more quickly.

In 2006, the school graduated ELL students at a 25 percent higher rate than similar schools.

Come fall, senior students at Tilden who are over 17 years of age will be funneled into GED prep classes or Young Adult Borough Center programs, which critics say lack necessary language instruction.

The summer classes are a direct result of an extended community effort spearheaded by Darnell Benoit, the executive director of Flanbwayan, The Haitian Literacy Project, which mobilized Haitian community members to ensure that Tilden’s senior class would graduate.

Jerome, 20, says he and his sister, Mackenzie, 18, who came to the Brooklyn from Haiti in 2007, are prepared to attend summer classes at Tilden if necessary.

“We will do whatever it takes. We are going to keep on studying and I know we are going pass our exams,” Jerome said.

The school has changed substantially since Jerome began attending Tilden in the fall of 2006.

“It was a great school when I started going there, people would fight sometimes but everyone was learning really well,” said Jerome, who came to East Flatbush, Brooklyn, in Sept. 2006 from Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

The DOE targeted the school for poor performance after Tilden’s four-year graduation rate hovered below the standard 50 percent to 45 percent from 2002 to 2005.

As has happened at many other “failing” schools throughout the city, Tilden’s best students were siphoned off to smaller public schools, funding was decreased and students were faced with overcrowding as four smaller public schools moved into Tilden’s

building from 2007 to 2008.

As of 2007, Tilden no longer offered bilingual education — nor did these newly created small schools, despite laws requiring them to do so. In bilingual education, classes are taught in students’ native language, which differs from English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

After hearing similar concerns about the “phase-down” of Lafayette High School in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, which stopped offering bilingual instruction in Chinese and English in 2007, Advocates for Children launched an investigation.

A scathing June 2009 report entitled “Empty Promises: A Case Study of Restructuring and the Exclusion of English Language Learners in Two Brooklyn High Schools” documented how students were systematically pressured to leave the ELL program and settle for GEDs, and only the students with the best test scores were allowed to transfer to other schools.

“The DOE will not get a second chance with the hundreds, probably thousands, of ELL students who have not received proper ELL services, have been forced to attend large failing high schools and have been pushed out of school,” Advocates for Children concluded in its report.

The DOE did not respond to a request to comment for this article.

Jerome and Mackenzie’s summer plans will be determined when their test scores are released soon after *The Indypendent* goes to print. They are both confident that they have passed their last Regents exam, which was in English.

“I think the schools in Haiti are better, because you learn through memorization. Here, it’s all about tests,” Jerome said.

Jaisal Noor is a participant in New York City Media Alliance’s Ethnic and Community Press Fellowship — Developing an Education Beat.



LAST CHANCE: Due to community efforts, seniors at Samuel J. Tilden High School like Jerome Djissy, 20, of East Flatbush in Brooklyn, have one final chance to graduate after their school closes this June. PHOTO: JAISAL NOOR

3 VITAL STUDENT RESOURCES

FLANBWAYAN, THE HAITIAN LITERACY PROJECT

Founded by Haitian community activist and former public school teacher Darnell Benoit in 2005, Flanbwayan offers tutoring, mentoring, computer access and even dance classes for recently arrived Haitian immigrants. 718-774-3037 • flanbwayan.org

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

A citywide agency that fights for students denied access to educational opportunities. 866-427-6033 • advocatesforchildren.org

CLASS SIZE MATTERS

Executive Director Leonie Haimson has highlighted the failures of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s education reforms. 212-674-7320 • classsizematters.org

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BELOW 14TH ST.
WBAI - 99.5FM
120 Wall St., 10th floor

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

ABC No Rio
156 Rivington St.

Mercer St. Books
206 Mercer St.

New York Public Library
Jefferson Market Branch
Sixth Ave. & 9th St.

Brecht Forum
451 West St.

4th Street Food Co-op
58 E. 4th St
Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.
Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.

Housing Conservation
Coordinators
777 Tenth Ave.

Domus 413
W. 44th St.

New York Public Library
Muhlenberg Branch
209 W. 23rd St.

ABOVE 96TH ST.
Kim’s Video
114th St. & Bway

New York Public Library
George Bruce Branch
518 W. 125th St.

New York Public Library
Countee Cullen Branch
104 W. 136th St.

New York Public Library
Morningside Branch
114th St. & Broadway

Uptown Sister’s Books
156 St. & Amsterdam

BROOKLYN
Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.

BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.

Vox Pop
1022 Cortelyou Rd.

Tillie’s of Brooklyn
248 DeKalb Ave.

Tea Lounge
Union St. & 7th Ave.

Video Gallery
310 7th Ave.

Ozzie’s Coffee Shop
249 5th Ave. & 57 7th Ave.

Verb Café
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Videology
308 Bedford Ave.

Pillow Café
505 Myrtle Ave.

Sisters Community
Hardware
900 Fulton St.

Brooklyn Public Library
Pacific Street Branch
25 Fourth Ave.

K-Dog & Dune Buggy
43 Lincoln Rd.

Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.

Blackbird Café
197 Bedford Ave.

’sNice Café
315 5th Ave.

Purity Diner
43 Underhill Ave.

Brooklyn Public Library
Bedford Branch
496 Franklin St.

BRONX
The Point
940 Garrison Ave.

Brook Park
141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mothers on the Move
928 Intervale St.

South Bronx Food Co-Op
3103 Third Ave. & 158th

Bronx Museum of the
Arts
1040 Grand Concourse

STATEN ISLAND
St. George Library
5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Branch
Library
75 Bennett St.

Everything Goes Book
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Getting Real On Food



LAND TO MOUTH: Just Food Farm Network Coordinator Jen Griffith helps local farmers market produce in New York City. PHOTO COURTESY JEN GRIFFITH

BT ELIZABETH GYORI

As local greenmarkets are bursting with fresh food from farms in the tri-state area, *The Independent's* Elizabeth Gyori caught up with Jen Griffith, the farm network coordinator for Just Food, an organization that helps connect New York City residents to our local farmers.

ELIZABETH GYORI: What is the definition of “just food”?

JEN GRIFFITH: It's creating a sustainable food system where people have the ability to know how their food is grown, to put a face on their food and be able to make educated decisions about their food.

EG: What is considered “local” produce?

JG: We consider local to be within 250 miles. A lot of people say 100 miles, but New York City is a really big city so we go a little bit further. But, the majority of our farmers are actually within 100 miles of the city. It's a one-day drive for the farmer to come in from that distance and go back. So we figure it's economically viable for a farmer to do that.

EG: What kinds of produce are in season right now?

JG: It's so many greens like salad greens, spinach, escarole, spring onions, radishes and turnips. If you're lucky, asparagus and strawberries. But, I think that ramps are over right now.

EG: How do you help connect New Yorkers to local farmers?

JG: We have three programs that farmers can actually sell food through. Our biggest is Community Supported Agriculture [CSA] New York City where you invest in the farm at the beginning of the season and then you get a weekly delivery of a share of the farm's produce. Normally, people go to the farm and pick up their produce but it doesn't really work in New York City, so we work with farmers so that they can come down into the city and drop off to community groups here. We have about 30 farmers selling to about 100 different CSA groups throughout the city. We also have a farm-to-food pantry program called Food for All that's funded through the [New York] State Department of Health. The third one is City Farms Market, which includes really awesome community-run farmers markets where we help by matching farmers with them.

EG: Just Food recently announced support for FoodNYC: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Food System proposed by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer. Tell me more about this.

JG: I think it's amazing that they even made a plan to look at food. It was kind of ignored in some previous city planning. But what I really like about FoodNYC is the process of how people made it. It came out of the Food Justice Summit that was a free event open to the public — over 1,000 people showed up. And everybody worked on these issues together so it was just a really democratic way of deciding what we were going to include.

EG: So what's the next step?

JG: We just need to keep doing what we're doing already because I feel like a lot of people are getting excited. I think more New Yorkers could cook at home. I think that would be a really great way for people to continue getting involved in their food system. We're really good at buying fresh fruit and vegetables, but maybe we could think about all of the different products we eat and see that everything on your plate could be grown in New York City. We encourage people to think about our meat sources and see how sustainable they are. And look at our milk sources and ask how can New York consumers support the [local] dairy industry. Ask how can we get more wheat grown in New York City so that we can eat local bread. I think that's a step forward. For example, Just Food had a really big campaign to legalize beekeeping. And in March, the Department of Health overturned the code so that now you can keep bees in the city. And so there's just been this explosion of beekeepers around the city. I think it's just a really fun way to get involved in your food system.

To learn how to connect to fresh produce and other tips about how to eat sustainably, visit justfood.org.



WATCH GRITtv AT 8 PM AND 9 AM ON MNN CHANNEL 34

2010 URPE SUMMER CONFERENCE

at Epworth Center, High Falls, NY
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No End in Sight



ENDGAME?: Drivers rounding the corner on Highway 1 in Larose, La., confront this graphic public art outside the Southern Sting tattoo parlor. PHOTO: JACQUELINE SOOHN

BY BRIAN MARKS

The BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill has again focused the nation on southern Louisiana. For the second time in less than five years, we are on the front pages of U.S. newspapers. And again, this region is terribly misunderstood.

Easy explanations miss the reasons why this area is so vulnerable. The national media have a tendency to see things through a close-up lens — capturing the details while utterly missing the larger context. This disaster has not only been a long time coming, but it is only one of a series of disasters.

The people of southern Louisiana are paying for this nation's unsustainable dependence on petroleum, its addiction to cheap imported seafood and its failure to invest in the constructed and natural infrastructures (like levees and wetlands) that allow us to survive here. The oil extracted off our shores and processed in refineries here does not go only to Baton Rouge, Houston and Shreveport; it powers the transportation systems of the nation. Seafood harvested from the Gulf of Mexico is prized in markets nationwide. Much of the bulk cargo (such as coffee) imported into the United States goes through Louisiana's ports. And tourists go on partying behind New Orleans' patched-together levees. Our relationship with the energy industry means we subsidize the "post-industrial green" economies concentrating the dirty, dangerous work of fueling America along the Gulf Coast. We live at ground zero in this uneven development of pollution, risk and disaster — the other end of which is your gas tank.

AN ERODING LANDSCAPE

The ongoing oil spill disaster rests against the background of another disaster: the slow land loss in southern Louisiana, accelerated by thousands of miles of canals cut through the coastal wetlands for oil exploration and navigation. Salt water now intrudes far inland, while the U.S. Army Corps' levees deny the coastal estuary fresh water and nutrient-rich sediment from the Mississippi River. This delta, which took thousands of years for nature to build, is vanishing in mere decades.

In the last 100 years, some 1,900 square miles of coastal Louisiana, an area the size of Delaware, has been lost. It's estimated that a football-field sized chunk of land is lost every 38 minutes across the coastal Mississippi delta.

But all of that is abstract until you stand

on the edge of brackish water where homes and businesses once stood. Land loss has not only made south Louisiana residents, including New Orleanians, more vulnerable to hurricanes, it's displacing entire communities. There is steady and quiet outmigration of residents who take with them knowledge of the culture and landscape. They remember when cattle grazed on dry land where today one finds only broad expanses of water; they recall live oaks and freshwater swamps, bisected by bayous and lakes before they were swallowed up by the Gulf. The oil companies have never been held accountable for their role in this other, slower disaster.

HOOKED BY THE PINK GOLD RUSH

For all the attention given to the effects of the spill on Louisiana and Mississippi's commercial fishermen, media coverage of this disaster again highlights the small, visible aspect of a much deeper crisis. The globalization of the seafood industry in the last 25 years means Americans eat seafood harvested from across the world, often grown on aquaculture farms, rather than what is caught along our own coasts. While Louisiana produces some 40 percent of the domestic shrimp harvest, imports make up about 85 percent of American shrimp consumption. That makes Louisiana's U.S. market share just 6 percent. The constantly growing amount and low price of these imports, mostly farm-raised shrimp from ponds in Asia and Central America, have destroyed the profit margin of U.S. shrimp fishermen in

the past decade. Since 2001, the geographic expansion and technological development of shrimp aquaculture has proceeded rapidly, and major restaurant and supermarket chains have formed strategic alliances with the global shrimp industry to capitalize on this "pink gold rush" that has driven down shrimp prices for producers worldwide while boosting their profit margins. So while Louisiana shrimp were (until this April) a relatively healthy, productive fishery, they have simply been drowned out by the volume of imports.

The disastrous hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike in 2005 and 2008 compounded this profit squeeze, forcing hundreds of shrimpers out of the business. Those who remain are now in an extremely precarious position where any new shock could bankrupt them. Just as the oil spill is on the surface an uncontrollable, unpredictable event that predictably resulted from government collusion with corporate greed, the present crisis of commercial fishing is the immediate manifestation of larger economic and political forces.

So while sympathy and contributions to help fishermen affected by the Deepwater Horizon disaster are welcome, real systemic change will come from understanding their situation in light of the concentration of power in the food industry. The resurrection of international commodity agreements that once supported fair farm prices is greatly needed to check the enormous power of global agribusiness. Consumers can also form direct links with Gulf seafood producers through programs like Fair Trade and Community-Sup-



More than 85 percent of the shrimp Americans eat is imported from countries such as China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Ecuador and India. Most of these shrimp are grown in pond farms. In the past two decades, the "pink gold rush" of shrimp farming has caused many conflicts between the shrimp industry and coastal people displaced by its global market expansion. Long before Hurricane Katrina or the oil spill, the flood of cheaply farmed shrimp crashed prices for Gulf of Mexico shrimp producers. You can learn more about shrimp and supporting Gulf of Mexico fisheries by visiting these sites:

Mangrove Action Project on Shrimp Farming: Mangroveactionproject.org

Food and Water Watch on Shrimp Foodandwaterwatch.org

The White Boot Brigade Whitebootbrigade.org

Southern Mutual Help Association Southernmutualhelp.org

ported Fisheries, which hold promise for addressing the root causes of today's problems by forging alternative ethical markets for sustainably harvested seafood produced by family fishers.

THE POWER OF PETROLEUM

To understand this landscape, one must grapple with the complex layering of Native American, Cajun, African-American, Anglo and Vietnamese cultures and centuries of capitalist resource extraction upon this battered but still bountiful land.

In what must seem like a cruel irony, the coastal Louisiana parishes most dependent on commercial fisheries and the health of the Gulf's estuaries are also those most dependent on offshore oil and gas production. Since oil was discovered in Louisiana in 1901 and Standard Oil (today's Exxon) built a huge refinery in Baton Rouge in 1909, the state's economy and politics have been soaked in petroleum. Eighty years ago, populist Gov. Huey Long built a legacy of roads and bridges, provided free school books and opened charity hospitals — all paid for with oil revenues. Gov. Long also maneuvered the fledgling Texaco Company into the huge new discoveries along Louisiana's coast in the 1930s. These fields fueled a surge of petro-industrialization in the following decades, until the oil bust of the mid-1980s plunged Louisiana into deep recession and fiscal crisis.

Today, southern Louisiana is an island of blue-collar manufacturing jobs in a sea of U.S. deindustrialization, an anti-union industrial enclave where a high school diploma and mechanical skills can earn someone a living wage. The active oilfields are now largely offshore, but onshore workers weld, sandblast and fabricate the rigs, ships and myriad tools and equipment that keep the archipelago of nearly 4,000 platforms in the Gulf supplying about a quarter of the total domestic oil extraction and a sixth of its gas production.

Louisiana is also the main terminal for importing foreign oil to be refined into products such as gasoline, chemicals and plastics. This concentration of refineries, power plants and factories along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans makes Louisiana's economy the most energy-intensive in the nation. The disproportionate share of the chemical industry in Louisiana's industrial base, the large-scale nature of chemical facilities there and the industry's power over government regulation meant that Louisiana's ratio of toxic pollution per chemical industry job was the highest in the nation in 1994, twice the ratio for the closest competitor, Texas. Louisiana is one of the top per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases, ranking fifth in the country (New York is 49th).

So while Louisianians make a living working for the oil industry, they also primarily bear its costs. We have not witnessed a groundswell of opposition to the industry in Louisiana, not just because of the profound influence of oil money in state politics, but also because of the lack of alternatives for sustainable economic development. While the recession rages elsewhere, the south Louisiana oil patch has the lowest unemployment rate of any area in the nation, as high oil prices continue to stimulate feverish offshore exploration and production. The dependency of the local labor market and tax structure means that almost everyone in south Louisiana vehemently defends offshore drilling. However, the ongoing oil spill's damage to Louisiana's fisheries, repu-

GULF COMMUNITIES FACE A SLOW DEATH BY GLOBALIZATION, CONTAMINATION AND CATASTROPHE.

tation and the future of the offshore industry itself has provoked a sharp sense of anger and exasperation at BP and the federal government's mismanagement of the industry.

The concern of other states around offshore drilling rings a bit hollow in Louisiana, for the rest of the nation readily consumes Louisiana's oil and gas without paying for the decades of devastation to the Mississippi Delta's wetlands or this decade's multiple disasters. The talk of freezing offshore drilling sounds to them much like those arguments just after Katrina for simply abandoning New Orleans: convenient excuses to avoid paying for disasters rooted in the exploitation of Louisiana for the profit of others, shifting the burden of disaster on the victims instead of addressing the interdependent, but highly unequal, relationship that has concentrated risk, pollution and the destruction of nature in south Louisiana — while accumulating capital and power elsewhere.

21ST-CENTURY SOLUTIONS

The demand by some groups to shut down offshore drilling divides environmentalists from Louisiana's coastal residents, who are afraid this spill will cause mass layoffs due to disinvestment by the global oil majors, which can shift operations to Nigeria, Brazil, the Mideast or Indonesia. There is a real concern that the deepwater oil industry will simply cut and run from the Gulf and take its drilling platforms abroad. "Shock therapy" deindustrialization and mass capital flight is not justice for the people of Louisiana, who did not cause this oil spill and are suffering the most from it.

The burden of responsibility needs to be on BP, an oil company whose safety record is among the worst in the industry. A more radical demand than "no drilling" would be the seizure of BP's oil leases and assets along the Gulf coast as compensation for this disaster. A nationalized oil sector would fund the recovery of the Gulf coast and provide the desperately needed money to save the remainder of the Mississippi Delta, following the example of Venezuela and other countries' "petro-na-

tionalist" redistribution of the huge revenues from energy production. At a minimum, we should not allow the oil and gas industry to leave the Gulf simply to recreate elsewhere the conditions of unregulated, rapacious extraction that led to the Deepwater Horizon. Rather than demanding that the oil companies pull their investments out of the Gulf, we should take a global perspective, organizing with people like the East Timorese, another coastal people who are fighting to control their offshore energy resources and who just last year faced an offshore blowout and huge oil spill in the Timor Sea.

Another model from which we can learn is the recent proposal put forth by Ecuador for keeping a huge oil reserve in the ground in exchange for payments based on the carbon emissions avoided by its preservation. This could lead to alliances between environmentalists and coastal Gulf residents, because unlike carbon offsets based on the conservation of forests, the deal here does not involve the enclosure of land from use by local people, but the enclosure of sub-soil resources from access by multinationals. Such a proposal would return vital revenues to Louisiana in order to restore the coastal wetlands and protect residents, as well as directly reducing the emission of carbon in the consumption of the oil. Such a proposal could begin to transform the oil-dependent Louisiana economy without further reducing its people's resources and income.

Brian Marks, from Terrebonne Parish, La., is a PhD candidate in geography at the University of Arizona. He is currently writing (with co-author Christian Roselund) The New Deal in Reverse, a book on New Orleans' public services from Huey Long's "petro-populism" to post-Katrina neoliberal restructuring and destruction.

For a comprehensive look into these disasters, visit independent.org



STORMY WATERS: Captain Judge Williams, 67, harvests oysters in the waters around Pointe à la Hache, La., on May 17. He sells the oysters to a local distributor who provides seafood for New Orleans restaurants and other locations around the country. As the oil spill worsens, his future is uncertain. PHOTO: SHAWN ESCOFFERY / shawnescoffery.com

Cultural Extinction

By JORDAN FLAHERTY

As BP's deepwater well continues to discharge oil into the Gulf of Mexico, the economic and public health effects are already being felt across coastal communities. But it is likely this is only the beginning. From the bayous of southern Louisiana to New Orleans, many fear this disaster represents not only environmental devastation, but also cultural extinction for peoples who have made their lives here for generations.

This is not the first time that corporations have destroyed the lives and communities of Louisianans. The land loss caused by oil companies has already displaced many who lived by the coast, and the pollution from treatment plants has poisoned communities across the state — especially in "cancer alley," the corridor of industrial facilities along the Mississippi River south of Baton Rouge.

"The cultural losses as a consequence of the BP disaster are going to be astronomical," says Nathalie Walker, co-director of the New Orleans-based Advocates for Environmental Human Rights. "There is no other culture like Louisiana's coastal culture and we can only hope they won't be entirely erased." Walker and co-director Monique Harden say this disaster represents an unparalleled catastrophe for people across the region, but they also see it as part of a long-standing pattern of oil and chemical corporations displacing people of color from their homes.

Harden and Walker point out that at least five Louisiana towns — all majority African-American — have been eradicated due to

corporate pollution in recent decades.

The most recent is the southwestern town of Mossville, which was founded by freed African slaves in the 1790s. Located near Lake Charles, Mossville is home to 375 households within five square miles.

Beginning in the

1930s, the state of Louisiana began authorizing industrial facilities to manufacture, process, store and discharge toxic and hazardous substances within Mossville. Fourteen facilities are now located in the small town, and 91 percent of residents have reported at least one health problem related to exposure to chemicals produced by the local industry.

The towns of Diamond, Morrisonville, Sunrise and Revilletown — all founded by former slaves — met similar fates. After years of chemical-related poisoning, the remaining residents have been relocated, and the corporations that drove them out now own their land. In most cases, only a cemetery remains, and former residents must pass through plant security to visit their relatives' graves.

The town of Diamond, founded by descendants of the participants of the 1811 Rebellion to End Slavery, the largest slave uprising in U.S. history, was relocated by Shell in 2002 after residents had been exposed to toxic chemicals for decades. Morrisonville, established by former slaves in 1790, was bought out by Dow Chemical Company in 1989. Residents of Sunrise, inaugurated near Baton Rouge in 1874, were paid to move as the result of a lawsuit against the Placid Refining Company. In the mid-1990s, after years of complaints about the air quality, chemical and plastics producer Georgia Gulf Corporation acquired Revilletown, a town that freed Black families had started in the years after the Civil War.

"We make the mistake of thinking this is something new," Harden says.

NOT RECOGNIZED

Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe is a small band of French-speaking Native Americans along Bayou Pointe-au-Chien, south of the town of Houma, on Louisiana's Gulf coast. Their ancestors settled there some 300 years ago and current residents describe the ongoing oil geyser as just the latest step in a long history of displacement and disenfranchisement. "The oil companies never respected our elders," explains community leader Theresa Dardar. "And they never did respect our land."

Continued on page 8

FEAR OF NO RECOVERY
Continued from page 7

In the early part of this century, the oil companies laid claim to land held by communities living on the coast that were isolated by language and distance. Over the past several decades, these companies have devastated these communities, creating about 10,000 miles of canals through forests, marshes and homes in their search for more oil reserves. “They come in, they cut a little, and it keeps getting wider and wider,” says Donald Dardar, Theresa’s husband and a member of the tribe’s leadership. The canals have allowed in salt water, which kills the forest and accelerates soil erosion.

Meanwhile, Pointe-au-Chien and other tribes have found they have little legal recourse. At least partly as a result of lobbying by oil companies, the state and federal governments have refused the tribe official recognition, which would offer some protection of their land rights.

So late in May, when oil started washing up on the shores of nearby Lake Chien and fishing season was canceled before it had even begun, members of Pointe-au-Chien saw the news as another nail in the coffin of the lifestyle they had been living for generations. On a recent Sunday, a few residents gathered at the Live Oak Baptist Church on the main road that runs through their community. They described feeling abandoned and abused by the government and corporations. They spoke of losing their language and traditions, in addition to their homes.

Sitting on a church pew, Theresa said they had met with indigenous natives from Alaska, who discussed their experience in the aftermath of the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill. “We don’t know how long we’ll be without fishing,” Theresa says. “It was 17 years before they could get shrimp [in Alaska].” And, she

noted bitterly, this disaster is already much larger than the Valdez.

BP has promised payouts to those who lose work from the oil, but Theresa is skeptical. “It doesn’t matter how much money they give you,” she says, “if we don’t have our shrimp, fish, crabs and oysters.”

“It’s the loss of our livelihood and culture,” Theresa added.

The anxiety that Theresa expresses is also increasingly common in New Orleans, a city whose culture is inextricably linked to the Gulf. “How do you deal with this hemorrhaging in the bottom of the Gulf that seems endless?” asks environmental justice advocate Monique Harden. “That is just scary as hell. I’ve been having nightmares about it.”

Residents who have just rebuilt from the damage caused by the 2005 hurricanes watch the oil wash up on shore with a mounting dread. “I never thought I’d be in a situation where I wanted another Katrina,” Harden says. “But I’d rather Katrina than this.”

LOSS OF LAND AND CULTURE

Across the street from the church in Pointe-au-Chien is a bayou where frustrated fishers wait on their boats hoping against all odds that they will be able to use them this season. Behind the church is more water, and a couple of miles further down, the road ends in swamp. Dead oak trees, rotted by salt water, rise out of the canals. Telephone poles stick out of the encroaching water along a path where once the road continued.

The miles of swamp and barrier islands that stood between these homes and the Gulf used to slow hurricanes, and now the entire region has become much more vulnerable. Brenda Billiot, another local resident, gestured at her backyard, a few dozen yards of grass that fades into marshes and water. “This used to be land,” she says, “as far as you could see.”

Theresa believes that the government and



LIVES ON THE LINE: Theresa Dardar, a community leader with the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe in southern Louisiana, says that oil companies have long disrespected tribal elders and have been destroying the land for a century. Fishing was banned in nearby Lake Chien due to oil contamination. She met recently with members of Alaskan indigenous communities at the Live Oak Baptist Church who discussed the impact of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on their communities. PHOTO: JORDAN FLAHERTY

oil companies are looking for an excuse to permanently displace the tribe. She thinks this latest disaster and the upcoming hurricane season may spell the end for their language and culture.


“I tell people, if we get another hurricane, take everything you want, because I don’t think they’ll let you back in,” Dardar says. “It’s scary because I don’t know where we’re going to go.”

This article was adapted from a longer version first published in the Louisiana Weekly. Jordan Flaherty is a journalist, an editor of Left Turn Magazine, and a staff member with the Louisiana Justice Institute. Flaherty’s new book, Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six, will be released by Haymarket Books in July.



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DEMOCRACYNOW.ORG

Independent news hour with Amy Goodman and co-host Juan Gonzalez
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The corporate media got it wrong on Iraq. Tune in to the show that got it right.

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Bronxnet Channel 67
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THURS JULY 1, 7pm • Free
READING: WORKERS’ EMANCIPATION. Join author Noel Ignatiev for a reading of *A New Notion: CLR James and Workers’ Emancipation*, which portrays C.L.R. James as a leading figure in the independence movement in the West Indies and in the Black and working-class movements in both Britain and the United States.

FRI JULY 2, 7pm • Free
READING: *FAST FEMINISM*. Author Shannon Bell reads from *Fast Feminism* and leads discussion on the theory of new-old feminism grounded in politics, performance and philosophy.

WED JULY 8, 7pm • \$5 Suggested
PRESENTATION: PEACE WORK. Long-time activist and former head of United For Peace and Justice Leslie Cagan leads a conversation, “Peace Work: Now or Never.”

THURS JULY 15, 7pm • \$5 Suggested
READING: --- *AND HER BRAIN*. Leah B. reads from her book, --- *and Her Brain: the Experiences of a Young Trans woman*, and shares her Gender EDGE philosophy.

SUN JULY 25, 7pm • \$5 Suggested
PRESENTATION: CREATIVE RESISTANCE IN LEBANON. The artists’ collective Jamaa al-Yad (The Raised Fist Collective) was formed in Beirut in December 2009. They have since been working with Bedouin farmers, migrant workers and Palestinian refugee. The presentation includes visual overview of their work, alongwith readings from two proposed books, *Craft Deceived: From Graphic Complacency to Creative Resistance* and *Foreign Body*.

For a complete list of daily events or to purchase a gift card, visit bluestockings.com.



SUMMER LIT PICKS

Political Awakenings

By Harry Kreisler
The New Press, 2010

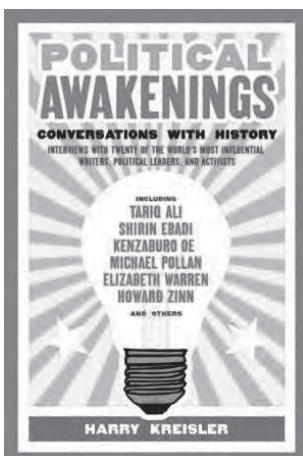
Hopes and Prospects

By Noam Chomsky
Haymarket Books, 2010

It's hard to come by a political optimism that isn't served up with winking campaign propaganda or tone-deaf idealism, but two recently published books that survey the dark developments of our time

through the eyes of preeminent intellectuals read like affirming challenges to forge a better world. *Political Awakenings: Conversations with Twenty of the World's Most Influential Writers, Politicians, and Activists* (New Press) is an empowered compilation of Harry Kreisler's interviews with the late Howard Zinn; Elizabeth Warren; Tariq Ali; Iranian human rights Nobelist Shirin Ebadi and other leading lights of the left, including Noam Chomsky, whose latest book bears the equally uplifting title *Hopes and Prospects*.

Political Awakenings is the best kind of interview compilation, extracting intimate, funny and inspirational reflections



from these towering figures on the personal experiences that formed their politics. Chomsky's gaze is as sharp and unflinching as ever in *Hopes and Prospects*, with the historical, statistical and anecdotal elements of his prose in powerfully resonant balance. Tackling U.S. - Latin American relations, Iraq and the fate of civil freedoms in the Obama years, he reads the recent past — and

the present — with an eye toward the horizon of real change, beyond hope.

—KATE PERKINS

King of the Flies: Hallorave

Story by Pirus, art by Mezzo. Translated by Helge Dascher and John Kadlecik
Fantagraphics, 2010

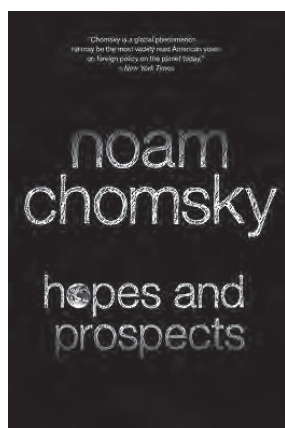
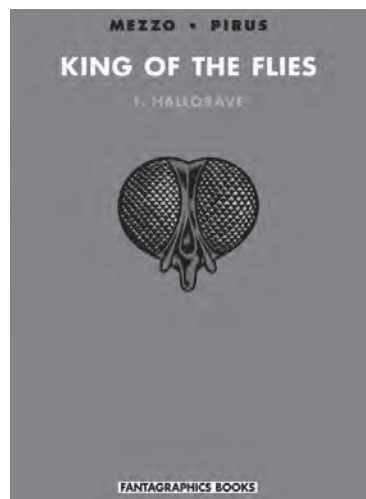
The graphic novel *King of the Flies: Hallorave* — the first installment in a trilogy, *King of the Flies: Hallorave* — gives us a glimpse of internal mayhem inside a controlled environment, executed with elegance and a touch of mystery.

The book evolves from seemingly unrelated short stories that gradually intertwine to form a single complex tale that follows, for the most part, a young derelict living with

his recently divorced mom and a cast of his shady friends. The self-referential angst often present in tales of young woe is absent; instead, the awful and the commonplace come together in a way that casts doubt on both, and on the reality these kids are living.

The comic's creators, Mezzo and Pirus, are best known in Europe for a series of gangster stories, but are virtually unknown this side of the Atlantic. *King of the Flies* has been compared to the work of Charles Burns for its graceful depiction of adolescent suburban horror. This is a weird tale that's easy to get drawn into, and thankfully Fantagraphics will release the second installment, *Volume 2: The Origin of the World*, in the fall.

—IRINA IVANOVA



IN MEMORIAM: **José Saramago**
1922 – 2010

The Gospel According to Jesus Christ

(1991; Published in English 1994)

In this fictionalized retelling of the life of Jesus Christ, Saramago portrays a humanized version of Jesus of Nazareth as flawed, complex, and full of doubts and passion. This novel earned Saramago the censorship and controversy that would plague him in his native Portugal until the end of his life.

Blindness

(1995; Published in English 1997)

An epidemic spreads throughout a nameless city, stealing the sight of its citizens. The blind, who can only see white light, are rounded up into confinement in camps, wherein moral authority coalesces in a small group and the consequences are borne out in a violence that leads to a military order in this fantastical, suspenseful tale about survival and social power.

All the Names

(1997; Published in English 1999)

An homage to the bureaucratic labyrinths of Kafka's *All the Names* is one of the great political novels of the late 20th century, examining power, order, chaos and individuality.

Seeing

(2004; Published in English 2006)

The sequel to *Blindness*, *Seeing* follows the story of "the seeing woman," the wife of a doctor who, despite following him into the camp, does not lose her own sight, causing suspicion and ill will amongst the other citizens. When a parliamentary election in the city turns up an majority of blank ballots, a struggle ensues to understand and dissolve the illusive non-movement of blank-voters.

—J.KYLE STURGEON and KATE PERKINS

Read the full text of J. Kyle Sturgeon's tribute to Saramago online at independent.org

Literary Goings On

TEXTS + TEXTURES: A WRITING WORKSHOP

July 10 • 1:00pm

If you are interested in experimental writing, and spending a Sunday afternoon talking about experimental writing with other experimental writers is your idea of fun (yes!) sign up for The Public School's free workshop. Facilitated by Mimi Zeiger, who blogs at LoudPaper, the workshop will be a chance for writers of all stripes to get together and apply methods of research and inquiry from fields like anthropology, sociology, philosophy, art, architecture, design and to writing about the city. A multi-media approach that may include text, drawings, still images, and video, will be encouraged.
177 Livingston, Brooklyn
RSVP: thepublicschool.org/class/1968

STORYCORPS; THE MOTH

All summer long, you can spin a yarn or tell a "shaggy dog" to a group of strangers. Make a reservation with your mom, your grandma,

your buddy, and go to the Story Corps booth in Thomas Paine Park in the financial district. Your conversation will be recorded on a CD and preserved with more than 50,000 others at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Another option would be to attend *The Moth Story Series*. The Moth is a non-for-profit story-telling organization, founded in New York in 1997 by poet and novelist George Dawes Green, and is now a semi-regular event hosted in different places like the Housing Works Bookstore Cafe, The Bitter End and The Nuyorican Poets Cafe. The event is quite successful and has since spread to locations in New Orleans, Detroit and Chicago. Event prices range from \$5 to \$40, so check the schedule.

—MIMI LUSE

Story Corps Booth:

Foley Square (AKA Thomas Paine Park). Free; donations appreciated. Reservations required. For details and operating hours: 1-800-850-4406 or visit storycorps.org

The Moth:

Various locations.

For information, call 212-742-0551 or visit themoth.org

Take Back the Summer



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

SHOREWALKERS

The nonprofit urban environmentalist organization Shorewalkers has been instrumental in preserving and promoting New York and New Jersey's public parks, shorelines and riverfronts. The group offers a tour for every fitness level, so take as much or as little time as you need to explore a huge variety of waterside environments throughout (and across) the boroughs. For those looking to go the distance: try the Batt-to-Bear Trail, connecting the ecological and geological wonders of New York and New Jersey in a 56-mile hike from the Battery to Bear Mountain. Along the way, visit five extraordinary national woodland parks, three small riverside towns, and countless historical landmarks, including Castle Clinton and Grant's Tomb. Dozens of shorter, localized walks and hikes are offered throughout the summer.

Free. For tour schedules and details, visit shorewalkers.org or call 212-330-7686

FORAGING IN THE PARK

Naturalist Steve "Wildman" Brill regularly leads free, hands-on ecological tours of major parks throughout the boroughs (and beyond, with occasional expeditions to Dobbs Ferry, Brewster and White Plains; as well as New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut). Discover the edible, medicinal and ecologically essential plants and mushrooms that are the public parks' natural riches.

Tour information and schedules, guides and educational resources, recipes and more can be found at wildmanstevebrill.com.

EXPLORING TWIN ISLAND

The Bronx's Pelham Bay Park boasts the best variety of natural scenery in the five boroughs, as suggested by the starting point for this day hike, Orchard Beach. A beach-side boardwalk, rocky shores, spectacular salt marshes and magnificent sylvan stretches are just some of the scenic pleasures of this 5.6-mile walk. Bird-watching, lounging and beach-combing encouraged.

Free. For information and directions, visit nycgovparks.org/parks/pelhambaypark or call the Pelham Bay Nature Center: 718-885-3467.

RECOMMENDED READING:

• **RADICAL WALKING TOURS OF NYC**, 2nd Edition (Seven Stories Press). Local political activist Bruce Kayton's maps of the city are drawn from a people's eye view. Grassroots landmarks include the homes of Langston Hughes, Emma Goldman and other radicals; the site of Mabel Dodge's salon; the apartment where John Reed wrote *Ten Days That Shook the World*; the site of Margaret Sanger's first birth control clinic; Black Panther headquarters and scores of other inspiring sites of radical history.

• **WANDERLUST: A HISTORY OF WALKING** by Rebecca Solnit (Penguin Books). In praise of solitude, meditation, adventure and discovery of oneself and one's world, Solnit's *History of Walking* is the perfect read to inspire your summer on foot.

Wildlife

AMBLING EXPEDITIONS
& ECO-EXPLORATIONS
& URBAN SAFARIS

HERITAGE WALKS

The past is vividly present in New York. Traverse the literary, political and architectural history of the city with these wallet-friendly walking tours.

• **HARLEM HERITAGE WALKS** are happening nearly every day throughout the summer. The rich cultural history of the area comes alive in a variety of specialized tours, so you'll never walk the same Harlem twice. Try the Harlem Renaissance tour for literary highlights; follow the music on the Jazz Nights tour or Harlem Gospel walks; or make a day of it with Spanish Harlem and Civil Rights History day trips. \$20 and under. Information: harlemheritage.com

• Discover the people's history of New York City with **GOTHAM SIDEWALKS'** community-oriented walks. Downtown, take the Women & Immigration tour of the Lower East Side or the LES Art History walk; take a cross-town music tour with Folk to Punk, East to West Village; keep the history of Coney Island alive with the Talking Boardwalk tour; and more. All walks are two hours long; three-hour bike tours also available. \$15 in advance; \$20 at the start of the tour. For schedule and reservations: visit GothamSidewalks.com

MULTIMEDIA & DIY WALKING TOURS

Devise your own route through the city with these downloadable audio tours:

• **THE NEW AMSTERDAM TRAIL:** Explore the architectural, political and cultural legacy of the Dutch from Castle Clinton to Federal Hall. Printable map included. Free. Information: nyharborparks.org/visit/tour-new-amsterdam

• **THIS HALLOWED GROUND:** A fascinating political history of slavery that tells the story of Africans' struggle from bondage to freedom in New York. Printable map included. Free. Information: nyharborparks.org/visit/tour-this-hallowed-ground

• **SOUNDS FOR SIGHTS:** Download a huge variety of NYC walking tours from Sounds-forSights.com. Their Bronx tours are especially good: check out Bronx Hip Hop; Yankee Stadium; Bronx Graffiti. Prices vary (between \$5 and \$12) as do tour lengths.



Pick-up Sports

If World Cup fever has inspired you to get out and kick a ball around, you're in luck: the city's pick-up sports culture is thriving, so join your fellow New Yorkers for some friendly competition. Free games are happening all the time, and not just for footballers. Basketball is the pulse of the boroughs, and the local courts are swarming with players of all ages and skill levels.

If you'd rather watch than play New York City's courts are host to some outstanding and flamboyantly talented ballers. You just have to know where to find them. Check out the excellent sites **PICKUP SOCCER NYC** (PSNYC.org) and **INFINITE HOOPS** (InfiniteHoops.com) to find games and plan your participation. Pick-up baseball and softball can also be located through InfiniteSoftball.com.

Competitive sports aren't the only way to work your muscles for free in the city this summer. Donation-based yoga and power-yoga (Pilates-infused) classes are offered in three locations by the excellent grassroots yoga organization **YOGA TO THE PEOPLE**. Visit yogatothepeople.org or call 917-573-9642.

Meditation-oriented yogis will enjoy the 45 minutes of deep-relaxation yoga offered every Friday at 5pm at the **INTEGRAL YOGA STUDIO** in the Meatpacking District. Information: 212-929-0585, iyny.org

Regardless of age or experience, **TAI CHI**, the Chinese martial art of self-defense and healing, is a great option for free, community-minded exercise. Visit the Tai Chi Chuan Center on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 7:30am-8:30am, in Bryant Park. (212-221-6110, bryantpark.org).

For a workout by the water, enjoy a **PILATES** class at Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park (AKA Brooklyn Bridge Park) in DUMBO, Tuesdays, 7-8pm. Arrive at 6:30pm to register and to borrow a mat if you need one. (718-802-0603, brooklynbridgepark.org).

If working up a good sweat beside the water just isn't enough, set out in a **CANOE ON THE GOWANUS CANAL** from the 2nd Street canal launch site. For the more adventurous, hop in a kayak on the harbor waters of the Hudson River or beneath the Brooklyn Bridge. The **DOWNTOWN BOATHOUSE** offers kayaking trips that are free and open to the public at Pier 40 and Pier 96; at Pier 96 every Wednesday, free kayaking classes are being offered, so beginners have no excuse not to head out!

For kayaking and rowing, visit downtownboat-house.org; riversideparkfund.org; and brooklynbridgepark.org.

Gowanus Canoe Club: Call 718-243-0849 or visit waterfrontmuseum.org/dredgers.

Tour de NYC

BIKING THE
BOROUGHS

TOUR THE BOROUGHS

THE TOUR DE QUEENS marks its third annual ride on **JULY 11**. Register to ride or volunteer or come cheer on the bikers and participate in family-friendly activities. TourdeQueens.org

Not quite ready to ride? Use the summer to train for another borough tour. Registration is now open for the **TOUR DE BRONX** (Oct. 24) at TourdeBronx.org.

Keep active with the Brooklyn cycling community and prepare for next year's **TOUR DE BROOKLYN** ride (June 5, 2011) at TourdeBrooklyn.org.

OTHER BIKE TRIPS WITH A RANGE OF MILEAGE OPTIONS:

- The Long Island Harbors Ride (June 25)
- Harlem Valley Rail Ride (July 25)
- The new Discover Hudson Valley Ride (Aug. 22)
- NYC Century Bike Tour (9/12)

Visit bikenewyork.com, *Transportation Alternatives* at transalt.org and *Times Up!* at Times-Up.org for a calendar of bike rides and plenty of other biking resources from workshops to maps.



For city dwellers in summertime, movie theaters are the ultimate indoor oasis. Dark and cool, they save us from New York's humidity, noise and crowds — and there are plenty of non-blockbuster movie venues to counter the worst effects of summer. These are highlights from their summer programming.

—A.S. HAMRAH



Film still from *Eldridge Cleaver*, showing June 30–July 9 at BAM Cinématik in the series *Contraband Cinema* that addresses the question, “What makes a political film?” On July 4, the screening will be followed by a Q&A with film subject and widow of Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Cleaver and curator Kazembe Balagun.

CONTRABAND CINEMA, BAM, JUNE 30–JULY 8

“What Makes a Political Film?” Features and shorts by filmmakers including Peter Watkins, Emile de Antonio, Harun Farocki, Jean Rouch, Pasolini, Spike Lee and Sylvester Stallone answer that question, in a series focusing on “transgression, allegory, agit-prop, secret histories and public battles.” Subjects include the Black Panthers, the Weather

Underground, nuclear war, napalm, animal cruelty, police violence, snake handlers and Samuel R. Delany. 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn Brooklyn Academy of Music: bam.org

ANTHONY MANN, FILM FORUM, JUNE 25–JULY 15 and THE COMPLETE CLINT EASTWOOD, THE FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN

CENTER, WALTER READE THEATER, JULY 9–27

In times of change and unrest, the American cinema turns to the western. While Eastwood's lesser-known but excellent works (*Bronco Billy*, *Pale Rider*, *Breezy*, *White Hunter, Black Heart*) show up in this series like belt buckles at an Arizona flea market, *Unforgiven*, *Gran Torino* and the films he made with Leone and Don Siegel are also accounted for. Among the makers of westerns in the 1950s, Anthony Mann stands out for his unflinching investigations of human treachery and physical pain in majestic craggy landscapes. Like Eastwood's, his films are surprisingly political and hard-nosed. Although he is known for his work with Jimmy Stewart, his non-Stewart westerns with Victor Mature (*The Last Frontier*), Gary Cooper (*Man of the West*) and Barbara Stanwyck (*The Furies*) are harsh and essential.

Film Forum: 209 W. Houston St., Manhattan filmforum.org
Film Society of Lincoln Center Walter Reade Theater: 165 W. 65th St., Manhattan filmlinc.com

THE NEW YORK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL, WALTER READE THEATER AND IFC CENTER, JUNE 25 – JULY 8

Subway Cinema presents its annual roundup of Asian genre madness, with four dozen movies from Hong Kong and mainland China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Thailand. This is that rare festival in which every film is worth seeing, its programming rivaled only by the awesomeness of its

website, which provides high-octane descriptions coupled with trailers for each film. In addition to movies with titles like *Mutant Girls Squad* and *Kung Fu Chefs*, the festival features John Woo's uncut *Red Cliff* and *A Little Pond*, director Lee Sang-Woo's film about the 1950 massacre of 300 Korean civilians by the U.S. Army. Film Society of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater: 165 W. 65th St., Manhattan filmlinc.com
IFC Center: 323 Ave. of the Americas, Manhattan ifccenter.com
NYAFF 2010: subwaycinema.com

ANTI-BIOPICS, ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, JULY 14–AUGUST 1

Non-bombastic films about historical figures by innovative auteurs include Peter Watkins's penetrating, socially conscious *Edvard Munch*, Rossellini's late-period historical films on Pascal and Descartes; Altman's one-man Nixon film, *Secret Honor*, with a stunning performance by Philip Baker Hall; and Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein*. Other Anthology summer series include documentaries from the 1960s and '70s on the outer boroughs, and '60s and '70s grindhouse-style genre films picked by William Lustig, the director of *Maniac Cop*. Anthology Film Archives: 32 Second Ave., Manhattan anthologyfilmarchives.org

92Y TRIBECA continues its innovative programming all summer with a series focusing on drecky

'90s blockbusters (*Basic Instinct* with Sharon Stone, *Fear* with Mark Wahlberg) and a screening of David Lynch's underrated *Lost Highway*, curated by the website Not Coming to a Theater Near You. 92Y Tribeca's film programming is the most forward-thinking and varied in the city right now, often featuring films programmed by the left-wing Red Channels, which picked some of the films for BAM's Contraband Cinema series. 92Y Tribeca Film Screenings: 200 Houston St., Manhattan 92y.org

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART,

always a haven for cinephiles, presents a full summer lineup of films by important directors of documentaries, foreign art films and Hollywood classics, including Frederick Wiseman, Lisandro Alonso, Sally Potter and Ida Lupino. The museum's exemplary Auteurist History of Film series continues throughout the summer, featuring films from the late silent/early sound period, that transitional era when the movies achieved a rare graceful simplicity that is both hardboiled and lush.

MoMA Film: 11 W. 53rd St., Manhattan moma.org



The Japanese film *8000 Miles 2: Girl Rappers* (directed by Yu Irie) makes its North American premiere at the 2010 New York Asian Film Festival.

Take Back the Summer

STAGE, SCREEN AND ROOFTOP:

film & comedy

For live, anything-could-happen comedy (minus the cover charge and pricey drinks), forget Carolines, Comix and the Laugh Factory. From stand-up to improv, the city is teeming with wildly inventive up-and-comers and hidden-gem venues to discover.

—MILES KLEE

Stand-up comedy fans should make a beeline for **IF YOU BUILD IT**, a killer bimonthly show at the plush hookah bar Karma Lounge. Karma's downstairs room is quickly becoming a hot alternative comedy venue, and with good reason: If You Build It regularly features New York's rising comedy stars, from Last Comic Standing contenders to *Saturday Night Live* writers. No cover charge, and sweeten the deal (and your laughs) with happy-hour drink prices and all the flavored tobacco you care to enjoy.

Karma Lounge: 21+
51 1st Ave., Manhattan
8pm, every other Saturday
KarmaNYC.com

Improv comedy is flourishing in New York after being smuggled out

of Chicago some years ago in the brain trust of quartet Ian Roberts, Amy Poehler, Matt Walsh and Matt Besser, founders of the **UPRIGHT CITIZENS BRIGADE THEATER** (UCB) in Chelsea. UCB comedy is, literally, still underground (below a Gristede's, to be exact), but it's host to such legendary teams as The Stepfathers, who make up surreal and hilarious shows on the spot, as well as the cutting-edge sketch comedy of Maude Night, where future TV writers and actors cut their teeth on the hot-button issues of the day. UCB's midweek stretch sports some well-kept secrets of improv, including the mindblowing duo 2 Square, Seize The Mustard (starring the writing staff of *The Colbert Report*), Conversations With Deb (up-roarious conceptual autobiogra-

phy), and Whiplash (free late-night stand-up hosted by veteran Leo Allen). Tickets are usually around \$5, and the Pabst Blue Ribbons always a wallet-friendly \$2.

Upright Citizens Brigade:
307 W. 26th St., Manhattan
For full schedule:
newyork.uctbtheatre.com/schedule/

Of course, UCB doesn't have a monopoly on improv, which only gets wackier and wilder beyond Manhattan. Brooklyn Lyceum hosts a weekly Friday night event — cheekily entitled **GENTRIFY BROOKLYN** — featuring the cream of the guerilla-improv crop and hosted by MADCAR, a mad-scientist mashup of beloved groups M.A.D. and Sidecar. After each show, without fail, a dance party materializes. Queens has **THE CREEK AND THE CAVE**, a weekend hotspot that serves mean guacamole and margaritas; there you'll find *Jaws: The Musical* as well as totally free improv shows by Teenage Cop and Frodo, and even an improv competition, The Arena,

where audiences vote on the funniest set to determine who moves on in a months-long tournament. If you can't leave Manhattan, see The New Deal make up a one-act play at **MAGNET THEATER**, or hit the East Village's cozy **UNDER ST. MARKS**, where you can catch the potent one-two punch of improv favorites Sherpa and Iron Ruckus co-hosting a Saturday night show while you kick back with a tallboy.

Brooklyn Lyceum:
227 4th Ave., Brooklyn
Gentrify Brooklyn: Fridays at 10 p.m.
(Facebook “Gentrify Brooklyn”)

The Creek and the Cave:
10-93 Jackson Ave., Queens
Schedule: thecreekandthecave.com
Magnet Theater:
254 W. 29th St., Manhattan
Schedule: magnettheater.com

Under St. Marks:
94 Saint Marks Place, Manhattan
Schedule:
horsetrade.info/CALusm.html

One of the most promising developments in New York City comedy these days is the explosion of storytelling-based shows. Operating left of field from straight theatrical monologues, events like **RISK** at 92YTRIBECA are usually organized around a theme — revenge, regret and intoxication being popular choices — that provides the writers and performers with a jumping-off point for all-too-true and funnier-than-fiction confessions. Risk features a stable of veteran performers and is spearheaded by Kevin Allison of *The State*, a cult-favorite '90s sketch-comedy series. **FIRESIDE STORIES** is a traveling show featuring underexposed comic talent, while the more established **LIARS SHOW** offers an engaging twist on the signature formula: One of the night's four speakers completely fabricates a tale, and it's up to the audience to figure out which.

92Y Tribeca:
200 Hudson St., Manhattan
Risk: risk-show.com
The Liars Show: theliarshow.com
Fireside Stories:
firesidestoriesnyc.com





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COUNTERING THE COUP: Thousands of people took to the streets of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, on April 20 to launch a campaign for a new constitution. PHOTO: GIORGIO TRUCCHI/Rel-UITA

By CHRIS THOMAS

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras—On June 28 of last year, soldiers burst into the Honduran presidential palace in the middle of the night, put Manuel Zelaya, the country's left-leaning, democratically elected president, on an airplane and exiled him to Costa Rica.

Cesar Silva, a reporter for state-run Channel 8 television, tried to go on the air to denounce the coup, but was censored. Instead, he took to the streets with his car and a loudspeaker to broadcast news of the overthrow, which was orchestrated by Honduras' traditional oligarchy.

It would be the first of many independent broadcasts for Silva, 29, who tirelessly documented opposition to the coup and the human rights abuses that were visited on the opponents of the new regime. He too was forced into exile after an incident in late December in which masked men dragged him from a taxi at gunpoint and brought him to a clandestine jail where he was interrogated and tortured for 24 hours before being dumped on the side of the road on the outskirts of the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

"It was impossible for me to remain in my country," Silva said. "I couldn't go anywhere without unmarked cars with tinted windows following me, parked outside of my house — I didn't have any other option than leave the country."

A year after the coup, Silva's experience is not uncommon in this deeply polarized Central American nation of about seven million people. A resurgence of paramilitary death squads along with regular pre-dawn police raids on the homes of government opponents have terrorized the population and helped reduce the visibility of the resistance. According to the Committee for the Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras, there have been at least 12 politically motivated assassinations since late January and more than 9,000 documented human rights violations committed by state and paramilitary forces since last year's coup. However, the repression hasn't so much eliminated opposition to the government as forced it to take a different form.

THE RESISTANCE

The National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP), or simply the Resistance, poured into the streets in the first days after the coup. For months, this massive nonviolent protest movement demonstrated daily, frequently blocking highways, while national unions carried out several strikes. Leading groups in the resistance include the Union of Beverage Workers, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Honduras, the Tegucigalpa-based Popular Block and the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations

(COPINH). All four have been targets of death threats and assassinations.

"The coup leaders want a bloody solution," said Carlos H. Reyes, head of the beverage workers union and a leader in FNRP. "That's why they are repressing us."

The FNRP, whose platform is explicitly anti-capitalist, has evolved into a national coordinating body with local and regional coordinating groups as well. Despite the ongoing repression, it continues to organize "in every neighborhood, in every colonia, in every community," according to FNRP coordinator Juan Barahona. The Resistance still calls for former President Zelaya to be allowed to return to the country along with 200 other political exiles. Its central demand, however, is transformational: a democratically elected constituent assembly that would rewrite Honduras' constitution to favor the country's poor majority.

To achieve this goal, it is patiently building for the future. Anti-government marches that draw thousands still take place, but the focus has shifted toward local organizing, political education and solidarity building between the diverse movements and organizations that make up the FNRP.

"We couldn't march half a block before they began to beat us and launch tear gas — that is why we began to change our strategy," said Berta Cáceres of COPINH and FNRP.

"Popular Resistance Collectives" are one FNRP initiative aimed at broadening political participation throughout the country. These collectives are intended to create local, democratic and participatory spaces for reflection and action. They are already taking root: From the *campesino* movement in the Aguan Valley in the north to the striking workers at the National Autonomous University to the *campesinos* of Zacate Grande in the south, diverse organizations and communities have begun to develop a sense of solidarity with movements throughout the country, each acting from its own space, but with a common purpose.

On March 12-14, more than 1,000 delegates from the Resistance participated in a mock constituent assembly in the town of La Esperanza to begin hashing out concrete proposals in anticipation of installing a future assembly to draft a new Constitution.

In mid-May, FNRP initiated a series of public forums across the country entitled "Peoples' Thinking," in which participants discuss and analyze Honduras' history and its present reality. These forums are also being broadcast over the internet so as to broaden the discussion and to allow the re-transmission of these exchanges by individuals, as well as community radio stations springing up throughout the country.

"The experience of the coup has saved the left decades of political education regarding the impossibility of genuine democracy under capitalism," said Tomás Andino of the FNRP in a recent magazine interview.

COMMUNITY RADIO

With most of the large commercial media vociferously backing the coup makers, community radio stations with strong ties to peasant, indigenous and social organizations played a fundamental role in breaking the information blockade in the months following the coup, and continue to do so today.

Not surprisingly, these independent voices have been targeted by state and paramilitary forces. On Jan. 5, Garifuna community radio station Faluma Bimetu was pillaged and burned, and by the end of May courts ordered the destruction of newly inaugurated La Voz de Zacate Grande in southern Honduras. Operators of other independent radio outlets such as the Jesuit Radio Progreso have received numerous death threats and in some cases have had to go into hiding.

Just as the Honduran media is deeply

A Short History of the Honduran Coup



June 28, 2009 ----->

Honduran President José Manuel Zelaya is kidnapped by his own military and sent into exile. Head of Congress Roberto Micheletti is installed as president. Zelaya previously angered Honduran elites with a number of initiatives including raising the country's minimum wage by 60 percent and forging closer ties to a coalition of left-leaning countries led by Venezuela. The coup takes place on the day Hondurans are scheduled to vote on a non-binding referendum to convene a constituent assembly to rewrite the nation's constitution, a move supported by Honduran social movements but deplored by the country's political establishment.

July 4, 2009

The Organization of American States expels Honduras by a vote of 33 to 0. Called a "blow to the democratic conscience of the continent" by Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo, the coup is widely denounced in Latin America, a region still scarred by memories of U.S.-backed dictatorships that flourished during the Cold War era. The Obama administration criticizes the coup but does little to pressure the Honduran oligarchy, despite its close economic and military ties to the United States.

↓

July 5, 2009 ----->

More than 100,000 demonstrators march to an airport on the edge of Tegucigalpa to watch Zelaya's attempt to return to Honduras accompanied by the presidents of Paraguay, Argentina and Ecuador. His effort is thwarted when the military refuses to allow his flight to land.



July-August 2009

U.S. State Department-backed talks between representatives of Zelaya and Micheletti begin under the auspices of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. The Micheletti government is advised by Lanny Davis, a longtime Clinton family political operative-turned-lobbyist for Honduran business interests. The talks drag on for weeks, giving Honduras' new rulers additional time to consolidate their power.

divided, so too are other institutions. In this heavily Catholic country, much of the Church hierarchy has been outspoken in its support for the coup, most notably Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga. Yet, the majority of the Catholic base and much of the clergy are sympathetic to the resistance and have denounced the cardinal and other clergy for their complicity with the coup. Bishop Luis Alfonso Santos of Copán, near the border with El Salvador, and exiled Olancho priest Andrés Tamayo have maintained close ties to the Resistance, with Santos leading mass at highway blockades.

A DIVIDED OLIGARCHY

Honduras's internal divisions extend into its ruling elite.

Rightist Porfirio Lobo assumed the presidency on Jan. 27 following elections last November that the FNPR boycotted and a majority of Latin American nations declared illegitimate. Since then, Lobo has struggled to gain support. His public approval ratings inside Honduras hover under 40 percent according to a recent CID-Gallup poll, while abroad the country still has not been re-admitted to the Organization of American States from which it was booted following the coup.

While maintaining a discourse of national unity and reconciliation, Lobo has taken clear steps to further consolidate the coup, placing current and former military officers in charge of migration control, the merchant fleet, civil aviation and even the state-owned telephone company. He established a truth commission, but his nominations exclude the victims of human rights abuses — a fundamental element of truth commissions by international standards. In response, the Human Rights Platform, a group of six national and international human rights organizations, has launched an independent commission that will begin its work June 28. However, his catering to the armed forces and the oligarchy has failed to placate the more hardline elements behind the coup. Lobo's lack of popular support, combined with his clashes with certain business interests and even the Supreme Court, leaves him atop a government on the verge of collapse.

Desperate to obtain more international goodwill and legitimacy for his government, Lobo has also floated the idea of offering amnesty to both sides in the coup. On June 9, Lobo stunned observers when he announced he too was at risk of being deposed in a coup. The plotters, he claimed, were members of his own party.

"I'm warning you that I know who you all



NOT AFRAID: A member of the Honduran National Front of Popular Resistance (FNPR) carries his daughter as they march past a line of police special forces. PHOTO: GIORGIO TRUCCHI/Rei-UITA

are," Lobo said. "I have information, and you were wrong about me."

Meanwhile, as Honduran oligarchs feud among themselves, the FNPR continues organizing.

All across the country, resistance members are in the midst of a massive campaign to gather signatures for "sovereign declarations" from their fellow citizens calling for a constituent assembly to re-found the country. They also seek the return of all political exiles, including Zelaya. This effort is intended to counter the repressive political climate and broaden participation in the resistance before the FNPR's founding assembly in September, in which it looks to consolidate its position as the most dynamic political force in the country.

The FNPR's goal is to gather 1.2 million declarations, equal to the official number (most likely inflated) of votes that Lobo received in last November's election. The declarations are being checked and centralized in Tegucigalpa. On June 14, with three months to go before the September 15 deadline, 549,743 declarations had been collected nationally. When the campaign is completed, the declarations will be presented before the Honduran Congress as well as international institutions to dramatize the level of discontent with the present situation in the country.

PINK TIDE

Last year's coup was carried out with the tacit support of the Obama administration (which has since fully embraced the Lobo regime), the

Pentagon and right-wing interests throughout the Western Hemisphere. They sought to draw a line in the sand against the "pink tide," the growing wave of left-leaning governments that have risen to power in Latin America during the past decade and have slowly begun to move the region out from under U.S. domination. This is not lost on the FNPR, which sees its struggle in a broader context.

"What comes next is not at all easy for the countries of Latin America," said Carlos H. Reyes. "The United States already has Honduras in its plans as a police force for Central America. From here they go against El Salvador and Nicaragua, and the same goes for Colombia ... against the countries of South America. These people are ready to put an end to all of the integrationist processes that we have been developing across the continent."

In spite of this offensive, the Resistance continues in its struggle to build "popular power from below with the direct participation of all sectors of society" towards a political program that responds to the grave crisis the country and the region are currently facing. As the one-year anniversary of the coup approaches, the FNPR doesn't plan on mourning the assault on democracy. Instead, it recently announced it will celebrate "the birth of a authentic direct democracy, which has put us on the path towards the re-founding of Honduras, and the construction of a just future for all."

Chris Thomas is an independent journalist based in Chiapas, Mexico.

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September 2009 - - - ->

Protesters inside Honduras continue to call for a constituent assembly and a new constitution. Zelaya successfully sneaks back into the country Sept. 21 and is greeted by tens of thousands of supporters when he appears at the Brazilian Embassy. The Honduran military quickly cordons off the area. Zelaya is confined to the embassy for the next four months.

Nov. 29, 2009

The main opposition groups boycott the elections as National Party candidate Porfirio Lobo wins the presidency in a vote marred by low turnout. The United States declares the Honduran elections a success while most Latin American nations refuse to recognize the election results.



- - - -> **Jan. 27, 2010**

Zelaya is allowed to leave the country as Lobo is inaugurated as Honduras's president.

March 12-14, 2010

A thousand delegates from the National Front of Popular Resistance convene a mock constituent assembly and begin to hash out their ideas for what they would like to see in a new constitution.

June 10, 2010

President Lobo announces that members of his own political party are plotting to overthrow him and install a new president.

—JOHN TARLETON

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Pearl Street Triangle

events

JUNE 6 ★ Free Railbird Concert!

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AUGUST 22 ★ Cooking Demo

Join the Community Markets Chef as she demonstrates the art of seasonal cooking!

Park Slope farmers market

MAY 23 THRU DEC 5
Washington Park
Fifth Ave betw 3rd & 5th Sts

events

JUNE 6 ★ Get the Dirt on Urban Composting

Learn how to turn your kitchen scraps into "black gold" from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's composting experts!

JUNE 13 ★ Free Railbird Concert!

JULY 27 ★ Electronic Recycling Day

Mr. Rubbish will be at the market today to take all your unwanted electronic waste away for free! Whether it's an old or broken TV, stereo, toaster, camera, or refrigerator, Mr. Rubbish will recycle it!

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theorizing a radical,
democratic, and Marxist
alternative for
the future."

—BILL FLETCHER, JR.



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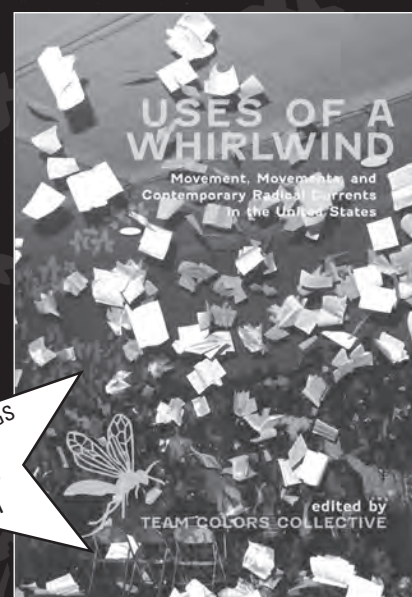
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Contraband Cinema

JUN 30—JUL 8

Q&A with Kathleen Cleaver
on Jul 4



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Dealing in transgression, allegory, agit-prop, and personal essay, *Contraband Cinema* presents stories of secret histories and public battles. In both content and form, these films ignite a dialogue around the question, *what makes a political film?*

HIGHLIGHTS *For the full schedule, visit BAM.org/Contraband*

Eldridge Cleaver (1969)

WED, JUN 30 AT 4:30PM / SUN, JUL 4 AT 7:15PM

William Klein's documentary follows Eldridge Cleaver just after he left the US for Algeria and established the International Section of the Black Panther Party. **Q&A with Kathleen Cleaver on Jul 4.**

The War Game (1965)

WED, JUN 30 AT 6:50PM

Peter Watkins' disturbing, faux-reportage style documentary illustrates the effect of a nuclear attack on the UK, the most urgent warning about nuclear proliferation imaginable. With *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969) "How can we show you napalm in action? If we show you pictures of napalm burns, you'll close your eyes." —Director Harun Farocki

The Animals Film (1981)

WED, JUN 30 AT 9:30PM / FRI, JUL 2 AT 2PM

"...a polemical onslaught which documents mankind's degradation, exploitation, and often pointless torture, of the creatures who share our planet." —Sunday Times (UK)

Black Panthers (In Israel) Speak (2002) + Jerusalem Tapes: (Israeli) Black Panthers on the Street

THU, JUL 1 AT 4:30PM / SUN, JUL 4 AT 2PM

The mostly unknown story is revealed of an Israeli political consciousness that tried to align itself with the Civil Rights struggle in the US, and Third World Marxism internationally.

The Garden (2008)

FRI, JUL 2 AT 4:30PM / WED, JUL 7 AT 9:30PM

A David vs. Goliath battle between Latino farmers and City Hall over a Los Angeles community garden uncovers a mess of bureaucratic corruption and backroom politics.

The 10th District Court: Moments of Trial (2004)

FRI, JUL 2 AT 6:50PM

A riveting documentary of the judicial proceedings and sentencing of misdemeanor trials in Paris that captures the intricacies of French trial law. Directed by Raymond Depardon.

Le Joli Mai (1963)

FRI, JUL 2 AT 9:15PM

Directors Chris Marker and Pierre Lhomme interrogate a host of Parisians in the spring of '62, as the Algerian War was reaching its bloody denouement. An elegiac and playful rumination on individual happiness in the face of a brutal political reality.

Inside/Outside Station Nine (1970)

SAT, JUL 3 AT 2PM

Ethnographic filmmaker John Marshall examines the inner workings of a Pittsburgh police station to arrive at a sociological study of civil liberties and the carriage of justice.

Underground (1976)

SAT, JUL 3 AT 9:30PM / TUE, JUL 6 AT 4:30PM

This documentary on the Weather Underground features shrouded interviews with Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, and more. The footage was unsuccessfully subpoenaed by the government.

W.A.R Stories: Walter Anthony Rodney (2009)

SUN, JUL 4 AT 4:30PM

The story of the famed revolutionary activist and author, assassinated in his native Guyana in 1980, is told through interviews with Rodney's contemporaries. **Q&A with Director Clairmont Chung.**

Workers Leaving the Factory (1995)

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The Woman's Film (1971)

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This invaluable cultural document traces the history of the women's movement in America through interviews with women from all walks of life who discuss their reasons for getting involved with the cause.

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THE VICTIM THAT IS ISRAEL

BY ARUN GUPTA

Amid the continuing fallout over the deadly confrontation on the Gaza aid ship, the Mavi Marmara, there is a critical historical lesson: There is only one real victim, and that is Israel. Sure, the “small, isolated” (WSJ, 6/1/10) nation may appear to have been the aggressor, having surrounded a humanitarian convoy in international waters with naval assault boats and helicopters before storming in with heavily armed elite forces killing and wounding dozens of civilians, but it was the one acting in self-defense.

Appearances are deceiving because understanding Israel’s eternal victimhood requires the proper mindset. First, *The New Republic* lets us know, the incident involved “a ship of terrorists” attempting “to open an arms importation route to Gaza” (6/9/10). With that fact established, the *Atlantic Monthly*’s Jeffrey Goldberg, who has been hanging “around a lot of Israeli generals lately,” kindly advises us that there should be “no particular pain felt for the dead on the boat.”

On the other hand, “There’s real pain in Israel ... pain at the humiliation of the flotilla raid, pain on behalf of the injured soldiers, and pain that the geniuses who run this country could not figure out a way to outsmart a bunch of Turkish Islamists and their useful idiot fellow travelers” (6/1/10). The White House sees no point in condemning Israel’s killing of civilians in the flotilla because “nothing can bring them back” (briefing by U.S. Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, 6/1/10). Hillary Clinton (*Village Voice*, 6/12/05) provides further insight, explaining how benighted Arabs who “are not sure what

democracy means” should look to Israel — “a beacon of democracy” — as an example. Clearly, Israelis are the only true humans worthy of our sympathy, a point the *Washington Post* understands, stating, “We have no sympathy for the motives of the participants in the flotilla” (6/1/10).

Why should one try to ease suffering in Gaza? Israel is a “peace-loving society” (*Educational Review Journal*, forthcoming) that offered to escort the flotilla of “naïveté and malice” (slate.com, 6/4/10) to the “Ashdod Port and arrange for the delivery of their supplies to Gaza after security checks, over land” (*Jerusalem Post*, 6/1/10). It was just trying to prevent “the flow of seaborne military supplies to Hamas,” the Israeli ambassador wrote in *The New York Times* (6/2/10). After all, Israel was only asking to search the flotilla’s cargo for banned “war materiel” (NYT, 6/6/10) such as coriander, ginger, nutmeg, dried fruit, fabric for clothing, nuts, musical instruments, chickens, donkeys, horses, fishing rods and newspapers (*Economist*, 6/1/10).

Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer comprehends that “the point understood by the blockade-busting flotilla of useful idiots and terror sympathizers ... is to deprive Israel of any legitimate form of self-defense” (6/4/10). Krauthammer deduces brilliantly, “The world is tired of these troublesome Jews, 6 million — that number again — hard by the Mediterranean, refusing every invitation to national suicide. For which they are relentlessly demonized, ghettoized and constrained from defending themselves, even as the more committed anti-Zionists — Iranian in particular — openly prepare a more final so-

lution.” As night follows day, if Israel let the aid flotilla reach Gaza, a second Holocaust would result.

Only Israel has “legitimate security needs,” as Hillary Clinton explains (Reuters, 6/1/10), whereas Palestinians’ “legitimate needs” are limited to “sustained humanitarian assistance and regular access to reconstruction materials.” Because Palestinians “are not sure what democracy means,” their needs do not include an end to the siege, basic human rights or a viable state.

Reports about Israel’s years-long siege of Gaza — where “more than 60 percent of families do not have enough food to eat, there are daily electricity cuts, and the water network is operating far below capacity” (Oxfam press release, 5/31/10) — are irrelevant. Sure, Israeli policy may be to “put the Palestinians on a diet” (*Guardian*, 5/16/06), fulfilling Army chief Gen. Rafeal Eitan’s longing to turn Arabs into “drugged cockroaches in a bottle” (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 2/05), but in actuality the “humanitarian situation in Gaza is good and stable” (AFP, 5/26/10), and people there dine out on “beef stroganoff and cream of spinach soup.” In any case, “concern for Gaza and Israel’s blockade is so out of balance,” counsels Thomas Friedman (NYT, 6/1/10). He suggests we focus instead on the bombings of mosques of an Islamic sect in Pakistan, the killings of activists in Iran and the trashing of a children’s summer

camp in Gaza.

But noble-minded Israel still shows concern. Just as it is always seeking peace with hostile Arab neighbors bent on annihilating it, Israel was willing to deliver supplies that are in abundance in Gaza (*JPost*, 6/1/10) despite the “Gazan terrorists [in charge] who proclaim their goal is to destroy Israel” (the-dailybeast.com, 5/31/10). So “if anyone goes without food, shelter or medicine, that is by the choice of the Hamas government” (NYT, 6/2/10). But the flotilla sabotaged Israel’s goodwill.

It’s another example of how Israel is victimized, just as when it selflessly disengaged from Gaza in 2005. But Israel’s generosity, including firing more than 7,700 artillery shells into northern Gaza in less than a year after its withdrawal (*Human Rights Watch*, 6/19/06), was met with Hamas rockets (*Democracy Now!*, 1/5/09), which is why one senior Israeli official threatened Palestinians with a “bigger shoah”

(*Haaretz*, 2/29/08). Then there are “Hamas sympathizers” (WSJ, 6/7/10) who ask why, if Israel disengaged from Gaza, does it still control its coast, airspace, borders, commerce, fuel, water and electricity (PLO Negotiations Affairs Department website); why have Israel and the United States rejected Palestinian and Arab offers of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders for some 40 years (DN!, 11/27/07); and why has Israel sabotaged virtually every cease fire (*Haaretz*, 12/3/06) Fatah and Hamas have agreed to in recent years, even unilateral ones.

These misperceptions persist because those who hold them fail to comprehend that Israel only “responds” (tomdispatch.com, 2/26/08) to attacks from the sub-human Arabs. Now we can correctly perceive the confrontation between Israel and the Gaza aid flotilla. The United States and United Kingdom understand the issue as Israel’s right to defend itself. The question we should be asking is how naïve, little Israel was outsmarted by “Islamists and their useful idiot fellow travelers,” who were responsible for and welcomed the bloodshed. The flotilla “aimed to provoke a confrontation” and was intended “to break’ Israel’s blockade of Gaza,” noted Leslie Gelb (the-dailybeast.com, 5/31/10), the dean of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, echoing the line from Fox News (*Newsbusters*, 5/31/10) to *The Washington Post* (6/1/10). The paper of record (NYT, 6/1/10) indicated that or-



ganizers wanted to provoke a “violent response from Israel,” agreeing with the *Jerusalem Post* (6/1/10), which stated the “peace militants’ ... attacked the soldiers who boarded the ship with guns, iron bars and knives and led to the dire results they were looking for.” This fact did not escape the Obama White House, with one “senior” official saying, “the organizers of the flotilla were clearly seeking a confrontation — and tragically they got one” (Reuters, 6/1/10).

Ever restrained, the *Jerusalem Post* (6/1/10) connects the dots. Because the “peace militants’ ... hatred towards Israel knows no bounds,” and they “wanted to cause some damage, no matter the cost for them,” they are like suicide bombers because “the aim justifies the means.” If the lesson is still unclear, Max Boot, Leslie Gelb’s colleague on the Council of Foreign Relations, spells it out in the *Wall Street Journal* (6/1/10). The “blood was on the hand of the pro-Hamas activists” because “Israel, like the United States and other democratic nations, is at a severe disadvantage trying to combat a ruthless foe willing to sacrifice its own people to score propaganda points.” Boot may be too generous in calling the activists “pro-Hamas,” however. The Israeli ambassador reveals they are actually Hamas’ “sponsors [who] cover behind shipments of seemingly innocent aid” (NYT, 6/2/10).

Although the passengers included European legislators, U.S. diplomats, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Israelis, doctors, clergy and journalists from around the world, Israel was not battling civilians on a “mission of mercy,” writes the great humanitarian Marty Peretz (TNR, 6/1/10). In fact, the Turkish sponsor, the Humanitarian Relief Fund, “is said to have ties to Al Qaeda. Which would be logical since Al Qaeda is an ally of Hamas.” Furthermore, Peretz illuminates, Hamas is the “Gazan outpost of the global jihad” and “second cousin once-removed of Hezbollah.” Thus, in stopping the aid flotilla, Israel was really combating a branch of the devious global jihad that hates the West without reason. (Hamas is also “an Iranian pawn” (NYT, 1/12/09), which may seem confusing because Iran and Al Qaeda are fierce enemies, as are Hamas and Al Qaeda (*The Guardian* 8/15/09), but such are the complexities of the Middle East that only experts like Peretz can divine.)

Prior to the deadly attack, there were eight previous attempts (CSM 5/28/10) to deliver aid by sea, including ships that Israel chose not to confront and which

delivered goods to Gaza without incident (*Palestine Free Voice* Aug. 2008). The Israeli navy spent “many weeks ... preparing to meet the flotilla” (*Haaretz*, 6/1/10), the military admitted three days before the raid that it planned to use violence (maxblumenthal.com, 6/4/10), and the Israelis warned the captains of each ship while in international waters that “lethal force would be used if they persisted” (DN!, 6/9/10). Despite this, we learn from the *Wall Street Journal*, Israel “walked into a trap set by a flotilla of Hamas sympathizers” (6/7/10); from *The New York Times*, it “blundered” (6/2/10) into a trap; from the *L.A. Times*, it “fell into a trap” (6/2/10); from the *Financial Times*, it “sail[ed] into a Turkish trap” (6/6/10); and from the *Guardian*, it was “lure[d] ... into a trap” (6/1/10).

If it seems curious that prominent media all conclude that golden-hearted Israel was duped, such is the “blatant double standard” (NYT, 6/1/10; *Mail & Guardian*, 6/9/10; *WSJ*, 6/3/10) applied to the Jewish state that “is destined and compelled, like a puppet on a string, to react the way it did” (*The Guardian*, 6/1/10).

The task at this point would appear to be disentangling what happened during the actual raid. For instance, why were the “out-numbered, under-equipped and incorrectly prepared commandos” (*Jerusalem Post*, 6/1/10) — who also happen to be “the best trained and most effective in the world” (*Haaretz*, 6/1/10) — “taken off guard by a group of Arabic-speaking men” (AP, 5/31/10) when the soldiers rappelled onto the deck? Or why has one journalist, Max Blumenthal, been able to force Israeli officials to admit they doctored photos and audio clips released after the raid or show they falsely claimed that five passengers on the Mavi Marmara were “active terror operatives”?

Why have eyewitnesses on the Mavi Marmara said “live ammunition was fired before any Israeli soldier was on deck,” and “The Israeli navy fired on the ships five minutes before commandos descended from ropes that dangled from helicopters” (freegaza.org, 6/7/10)? There are also the 81 questions that Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery has compiled, such as why is Israel claiming Gaza’s territorial waters are part of Israel’s territorial waters when it has “separated” from it; why were five people on the Mavi Marmara shot in the back; “what is the source of the lie that the Turks called out ‘Go back to Auschwitz’”; and “who invented the story that the activists had brought with them

deadly weapons” (Ma’an News Agency, 6/12/10)?

All these questions miss the point. Israel is still the victim, even if it’s a “self-inflicted wound,” so say *The New York Times* (6/1/10) and *Los Angeles Times* (6/2/10). You see, Israel made the mistake of trying to justify its actions with evidence. It forgot that reality has a well-known terrorist bias. When the facts sympathize with Hamas, terrorists and drugged cockroaches, Israel needs to dispense with the facts. Because we know Israel is the eternal victim, that is all we need to know. All that matters is how Israel says it perceives the situation.

Arie Lova, Eliav, one of the “granddaddies of the Israeli Left” and a founder of Labor Party, who died literally hours before the raid on the flotilla, put it best in an interview six years ago, saying, “We acted as they would have done to us” (*Jerusalem Post*, 6/1/10). While he was speaking about Israel’s founding war of aggression, the statement justifies every Israeli atrocity since 1947 and any future one. Since Israel is confronting “ruthless, indiscriminate animals” (CNN, 7/20/06), its response is only limited by the imagination. After all, according to the Obama administration, “the president has always said it will be much easier for Israel to make peace if Israel feels secure” (abc.com, 6/1/10). And how does Israel feel? “Israel has long seen itself as the Alamo, a fortress under the siege,” a former U.S. ambassador to Israel explains (WP, 6/6/10).

We come to one of the most important principles of the Middle East conflict: While we should treat Israeli perceptions as reality, Palestinians’ reality is just perception that is up for debate. For example, “Palestinians say the restrictions on food imports and construction materials have created a humanitarian crisis” (*BusinessWeek*, 6/7/10).

So the next time there is news about Israel killing activists, massacring children, bombing a refugee camp or perhaps obliterating an entire country, there is no need to pay attention to the “facts.” The only reality you should consider is that Israel, the eternal victim that will never feel secure, is just responding to some terrorist’s outrage. And once the last “ruthless, indiscriminate animal” is exterminated, there will be “peace.”

This article was adapted from a longer version published by alter-net.org. Research assistance provided by Susie Rivo.

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Jordan Flaherty

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Foreword by Amy Goodman
Preface by Tracie Washington

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